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General Assembly
Nineteenth Special Session

Official Records

3rd plenary meeting
Tuesday, 24 June 1997, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21

The President: The Assembly will first hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Leonid D. Kuchma, President of Ukraine.

Mr. Kuchma, President of Ukraine, was escorted to the rostrum.

President Kuchma (*spoke in Ukrainian; English text furnished by the delegation*): The five years since the Rio de Janeiro Conference have proved the historic and practical value of the decisions taken there. For the first time ever, the ecological dimension of ensuring peace and further economic development was upgraded to a level commensurate with the key problems facing mankind.

In this respect, may I recall the fact that almost 10 years ago Ukraine was one of the initiators of the elaboration of the concept of international ecological security, which served as a starting point for drafting Agenda 21. Regrettably, we have not yet managed to achieve the principal goal: to translate words into resolute actions, and to take concrete practical measures. The state of the environment on our planet today is still a matter for serious concern.

The years following Rio have coincided with Ukraine's establishment as an independent nation in which profound political, social and economic reforms have begun to take place. This process has become complicated by the ecological crisis in our country. Its roots go back to the Chernobyl disaster and to the excessive technological burden placed on the environment. That is why the ecological component of our national security is becoming one of the dominating factors in the domestic and foreign policies of the Ukrainian State.

We have inherited from the former Soviet Union an economy that wastes resources and energy, dating from a time when natural resources were considered to have no cost and to be practically inexhaustible. It is worthwhile to mention that the resource consumption of Ukrainian products is two to three times higher than that of world standards, and its level of energy waste is six to nine times greater than the world level. The technological pressure on Ukraine's territory exceeds by six to seven times that in the developed European countries.

Equally disturbing are the following figures: 80 per cent, and in some regions even 90 per cent, of Ukraine's agricultural lands have been subject to ploughing. More than 25 billion tons of accumulated waste cover 130 thousand hectares of the world-renowned Ukrainian soil. During the last five years, the population of our country has declined by almost 1 million. Ecological factors, of course, cannot be blamed for everything, but unfortunately their contribution is enormous. That is why

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for Ukraine Agenda 21 is not simply an abstract idea with an indefinite implementation period, but the very concept of and strategy for our survival. With this in mind, we are aiming our efforts at the true integration of the environmental protection policy into the social and economic development strategy. Ensuring ecological security and maintaining ecological balance on Ukrainian territory is one of the priorities of State policy determined by the Constitution.

Legislation in the spheres of environmental protection and the rational use of natural resources has been radically reviewed. Based on the decisions of Rio 1992, the concepts and guidelines of State ecological policy have been drafted. We have begun the transition from administrative to market methods of managing environmental protection activities. Paying for the special usage of natural resources and for the pollution of the environment, and a new system of funding and credits to protect nature, have been introduced.

Protecting nature has become one of our major priorities. During the last three years alone, the size of the reserve areas has been increased by 1.5 times. This is a sort of "golden fund" for our nation. Active measures are being taken to harmonize national and international legislation in ecological matters. At present, Ukraine is a party to 17 international conventions on environmental protection and 15 protocols to them. The next step will be the practical implementation of the concept of sustainable development of Ukraine, which is to be approved by the Government in the near future.

However, the implementation of these and other measures has been complicated by a number of factors. Apart from the difficulties related to the complex process of transformation into a market economy, the problem of Chernobyl continues to be a substantial obstacle to achieving the sustainable development of our country. Ukraine spends about $1 billion a year on efforts to minimize the effects of the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster. However, today, 11 years after the catastrophe, we are still feeling its after-effects, as are others. In a bid to remove this threat from mankind, we have decided to decommission the Chernobyl nuclear power plant by the year 2000. Shutting down the first reactor in 1996 was the first step in this direction. We expect the Group of Seven countries to live up to their commitments in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding.

I should like to emphasize that Ukraine has radically reformed its State system for ensuring nuclear and radiation safety, taking due account of broad international experience. Today, we have every reason to state that in Ukraine we have laid the foundations — structural, scientific, methodological, legal and economic — of a new State policy based on the principles of sustainable development typical of countries with market economies. It has become economically unprofitable for the State to pollute the environment and to engage in excessive consumption of natural resources. That is the main result of our efforts.

This session is proving that, on the eve of the third millennium, mankind has become fully aware of the biospheric scale of its activities. More than 70 years ago, our great compatriot and founder of the science of the Earth biosphere, Vladimir Vernadsky, said:

> "All the people of the world are turning into a powerful geological force. They, their thoughts and their labour are facing the task of rebuilding the biosphere in the interests of a free-thinking mankind as a whole."

It took us a very long time to realize this truth. The future of our children depends on our ability to comprehend this truth and, first and foremost, to act appropriately.

That is why the time has come today for us to start drafting a universal international legal instrument aimed at guaranteeing global ecological security, an instrument that would establish norms of permissible ecological behaviour for every country in the interests of the survival and prosperity of our civilization in the twenty-first century.

The President: I thank the President of Ukraine for his statement.

Mr. Leonid Kuchma, President of Ukraine, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Sir Ketumile Masire, President of the Republic of Botswana.

Sir Ketumile Masire, President of the Republic of Botswana, was escorted to the rostrum.

President Masire: It is my pleasure to pay tribute to you, Sir, for the able manner in which you are guiding the work of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. Your stewardship amply justifies the

confidence we repose in you and your country, Malaysia, with which Botswana enjoys the most cordial of relations.

May I also pay tribute to our Secretary-General and his staff for the excellent preparations they have made for the convening of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly. These preparations augur well for the success of our deliberations.

Five years ago at Rio, we committed ourselves to cooperating in the promotion of people-centred development in an international economic environment conducive to sustainable economic growth. We recognized that economic, social and environmental issues are better handled and better appreciated if they involve the participation of all citizens at all levels. We further recognized that peace, development and environmental protection are inextricably intertwined.

Since Rio, a series of global conferences and summits has been held to address issues of social and economic development. In all these forums, poverty eradication has been identified as a social, ethical, political and economic imperative. There is an increased awareness that poverty eradication is fundamental to reinforcing peace and achieving sustainable development.

In Botswana, we have always recognized that democracy and peace are necessary for sustainable development. We are aware that the absence of these fundamental essentials would negate everything we have set ourselves to achieve. We agree that we should establish achievable time-bound goals and targets in the short, medium and long term towards sustainable development. And, above all, we should make available the necessary resources to achieve these goals and targets.

Poverty remains an issue of great concern to Botswana. Its alleviation and eventual eradication are top priorities. We have therefore put in place various programmes which are aimed at achieving this goal. Much has been achieved in the provision of social services. There is almost 100 per cent access from primary to secondary education. We have achieved significant reductions in mortality levels from the 1970s to today. Consequently, life expectancy at birth rose from 56 years in 1971 to 66 years in 1996. Access to health services has been enhanced, with the majority of the population being within 15 kilometres of a health facility. We have made tremendous strides in the provision of sanitation facilities and potable water, and bituminized roads link our villages.

We are aware that all these achievements are relative and that more remains to be done. Another major challenge facing our country is to ensure a balance between economic growth, environmental protection and the rate of population growth. The high rate of population growth and its associated high-dependency burden puts considerable pressure on households, communities and Government. This, no doubt, also puts tremendous pressure on the environment.

To respond to this challenge, we have drafted a new policy on population to be presented to our Parliament next month. The policy is designed to address our development processes in a more coordinated and integrated manner.

To protect and conserve biological diversity, Botswana has set aside 17 per cent of its territory as national parks and game and forest reserves. An additional 22 per cent is designated as wildlife management areas.

Botswana has adopted and is implementing a policy of community-based natural resource management. This policy ensures that communities benefit directly from the wise utilization of natural resources. This approach renders communities accountable for the protection of their environment, thus creating a platform for sustainable development.

Botswana has become party to the Rio Conventions: the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as well as the post-Rio Convention to Combat Desertification. In addition, we have also become party to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance and have designated the Okavango Delta as our first Ramsar site. We are also collaborating with our cooperating partners in order to meet our obligations under the these conventions.

Botswana remains committed to both the letter and the spirit of Rio. We urge our cooperating partners to redouble their efforts to assist those of us in the developing world who lack the capacity and the necessary resources to meet our targets of sustainable development.

What we all need to do now is to translate our words into action. And let us summon our will to do so.

The President: I thank His Excellency the President of the Republic of Botswana for his statement.

Sir Ketumile Masire, President of the Republic of Botswana, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, President of the Republic of Maldives.

Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, President of the Republic of Maldives, was escorted to the rostrum.

President Gayoom: It is my pleasure, first of all, to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to preside over this important special session.

Ten years ago, I stood at this rostrum and spoke about the impending dangers to my country, the Maldives, from the rise in sea levels. Much has happened since then, but the threat to my country has remained as alarming and as urgent as ever. The irony, too, is no less painful. My country is among those that contribute the least to environmental degradation, but it would certainly be among the most helpless in dealing with the potentially catastrophic effects of climate change and a rise in sea levels.

Five years ago, at the Earth Summit, all nations pledged an Agenda for the twenty-first century, the cornerstone of which was sustainable development. Five years down the road, we find that we have made little progress. It is true that in some countries, local authorities, businesses, the professions and non-governmental organizations have taken the first steps, but Governments have woefully lagged behind.

For small island States, the biggest environmental threat would stem from climate change and a rise in sea levels. An increased, or even the present, level of emission of greenhouse gases will lead to global warming and a worldwide rise in ocean levels. The process may be too gradual to make sensational headlines, but the threat would be no less real. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), as a result of global warming, sea levels would rise between 30 and 100 centimetres by the year 2100. Eighty per cent of low-lying islands, such as those of the Maldives and many in the Pacific Ocean, would be totally submerged.

But the threat is not limited to tiny island States with small populations. Developed countries would not be left unharmed either. The inundation of coastal and other low-lying areas in those countries is likely. Increasingly arid conditions and changing weather patterns could destroy agriculture. Ozone depletion, acid rain and pollution would pose numerous health and other hazards. Furthermore, the impact of the rapidly increasing world population on the Earth's ecological capital would be enormous. Indeed, environmental degradation will have profound consequences for both rich and poor States, for it will affect the Earth's entire ecosystem.

Members will recall that at the Earth Summit donor States agreed to increase official development assistance to 0.7 per cent of gross national product. But the hard fact is that actual assistance has since then dropped by about 25 percent. Indeed, nothing mars the policy advances that were made at the Earth Summit more than this lamentable truth.

If we are to save the Earth for coming generations of humankind, the strengthening of global cooperation for sustainable development is imperative. The Global Environment Facility must be replenished to sufficient levels without further delay. Moreover, the transfer of environmentally friendly technology from advanced to developing countries is fundamental.

It is equally important to expedite the implementation of the United Nations conventions on biodiversity, on climate change and on desertification. Unless the obligations and commitments in these agreements are honoured, a worldwide environmental disaster could overtake us, sooner rather than later. Therefore, as we approach the Kyoto conference, we must ensure that legally binding targets for cutting down greenhouse gas emissions are set by all Governments, especially by those of the industrialized countries.

As the current Chairman of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), I wish to state that in preparation for this meeting, the Ministers of the Environment of the member States of SAARC met and issued the Delhi Declaration. The Declaration represents the views of one fifth of humanity. It emphasizes their disappointment with the slow implementation of the commitments undertaken at Rio. The Declaration is a call that comes from a region where the problems of ecological degradation are acutely felt, from the Himalayan hills to the low-lying atolls of the Indian Ocean.

Five years after Rio, the actions of leading nations do not reflect their recognition that all humankind has a common future. Our efforts to collaborate on Rio commitments have often been hindered by sterile debates about relative gains. But Agenda 21 will not divide the world between victor and vanquished. Rather, depending on how we respond to it, we will either all be winners, or all losers.

In order to address the many challenges posed by environmental threats, a commitment at the highest political level is absolutely essential. We have to accept, not in words, but through our policies and actions, that we cannot succeed in saving our planet until a real global partnership is achieved. The Maldives and many other small States have put the protection and preservation of the environment at the top of their national agendas.

However, efforts at the national level alone are not enough, for environmental problems do not begin or end at the border.

When the red light blinks, I shall follow your orders, Mr. President, and stop speaking. My only worry is that when the red light of environmental catastrophe lights up, there may not be an opportunity for any of us to say anything.

At the Earth Summit, I stated that I represented a people endangered by the threat of the rise in sea levels. I left Rio confident that we had an agreed Agenda that would save not only us but the whole world. But today I leave here with the fear that unless we all act now with a renewed commitment, my country and many others like it will have neither a voice nor a seat at a future Rio +.

The President: I thank His Excellency the President of the Republic of Maldives for his statement.

Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, President of the Republic of Maldives, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Serene Highness Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco.

His Serene Highness Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco, was escorted to the rostrum.

Prince Albert (Monaco) (*interpretation from French*): Just over five years ago I had the privilege of joining my father, the Sovereign Prince, at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. There is no doubt that the Conference gave rise throughout the world to great hope that the international community would agree to ensure the conditions for sustainable development on Earth.

The Principality shared that hope and was among the first countries to sign and ratify the conventions that were opened for signature at Rio: the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Since that important Conference, the Principality of Monaco has worked to develop its national policy and its international cooperation in line with major factors, dictated by geography, that reflect the concerns it deems essential for its future and the future of the region. We have thus entered into bilateral agreements with Bulgaria, Lebanon and Tunisia with a view to implementing a water-quality monitoring system, a reforestation programme and an emphasis on the conservation of coastal zones.

On the multilateral level, my country has closely followed major international programmes such as the United Nations Environment Programme and those carried out by the World Health Organization and the International Maritime Organization.

From 14 to 17 January 1997, Monaco was honoured to host the seventh session of the High-level Advisory Board on sustainable development. I believe that its report, submitted to the Commission on Sustainable Development last April, should help enrich our debate.

The unreserved support that the Government of the Principality has provided since 1961 to the International Marine Environment Laboratory of the International Atomic Energy Agency is a further sign of our determination to facilitate scientific cooperation that is indispensable in the fight against all forms of pollution in the oceans and seas. This work is contributing to the implementation of its plan for the Mediterranean and to the Mediterranean Pollution (MEDPOL) programme.

I shall speak no more of this aspect of the subject, since our national report, which was distributed this morning, sets it out, I think, completely and explicitly.

Instead, let me reflect, along with other members of the Assembly, on whether we can really be satisfied with what has been accomplished over the past five years with

regard to the sustainable development of the planet in general. Here one can note that genuine awareness of the problems has unquestionably been reflected in positive measures in developed countries. Yet, with a few notable exceptions, those same countries, many of which have experienced economic crisis and unemployment, have not achieved all the Rio objectives in the areas of official development assistance or of technology transfer.

This poses a fundamental question for the third millennium, which we are about to enter. Can we truly make the necessary effort so that all mankind, not merely a privileged group, can genuinely benefit from growth and the improvement of the living conditions of the present generation without jeopardizing the future of generations to come, *inter alia* through the exhaustion of our natural resources and increased pollution?

On 11 June 1992, in his address to the Rio Conference, my father, the Sovereign Prince, spoke of his concerns about the fate of a region that is particularly threatened: the Mediterranean, one of the cradles of mankind, where Monaco is located. It seems to me that the situation of the Mediterranean area exemplifies the entire world on the regional level, with its developed economies to the North, its developing South and East coasts and its countries in transition. It can also be viewed as an example of the success and the shortcomings of action by States and by international organizations.

The first of those successes, I believe, is the emergence of a regional awareness, which was originally focused solely on the fight against pollution, with the 1975 Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution, which was extended to all areas of environment and development with the 1996 revision of the text. This awareness gained further ground with the establishment of the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development (MCSD), involving the coastal States, non-governmental organizations and social and economic participants. I believe that this is the sole example to date of a regional organ charged with study and proposals in this sphere.

Thanks to the determination of the Mediterranean States and the tenacity of the organizers of the MCSD — particularly its President, the Moroccan Minister of the Environment — our region has gained an outstanding tool that enables it to offer States cooperation in areas that are highly sensitive for all of us. Among these I shall mention only the management of drinking-water resources and the integrated management of coastal zones.

I wish also to say that, while our Mediterranean area may be an example of cooperation in the sphere of environment and development, it is critical that this cooperation continue also to include the preservation of species. With regard to the protection of the seas and their fauna and flora, Monaco has a long tradition based on the experience of my ancestor, Prince Albert I, the one-hundred-fiftieth anniversary of whose birth we shall be marking next year. We must not slacken our efforts in this area, even if this runs counter to some short-term economic interests, so that the biological diversity of the Mediterranean will not deteriorate further.

Along with my father, the Sovereign Prince, I regret — without losing hope that it may be considered in the future — that an independent liaison office for the Mediterranean and Black Seas, the establishment of which he proposed, has not yet been created.

There has been a more concrete response to his call for the formulation of a framework convention for the protection of sensitive areas, including those in international zones. There has been a meeting of minds among the three countries of the French-Italian-Monegasque Commission (RAMOGE) on the establishment of a sanctuary for the protection of marine mammals in the Corsican-Ligurian-Provençal zone. While domestic laws on this have already been adopted, the final agreement has not yet been concluded; I take this opportunity to say how gratifying it would be for the States concerned to see this project come about and to put it to the international community for its support.

It is indispensable that marine mammals be effectively protected. Here a step has already been taken with the signing of a protection agreement, in Monaco last November, on the initiative of the Principality, by a dozen Mediterranean and Black Sea countries. But we must go further.

This is but one tiny aspect of a huge work site. But this is how, piece by piece, we must construct a human society that cares about sustainable development. Monaco will continue to make the best contribution it can.

I wish finally to say, as a member of the International Olympic Committee, that the Olympic Movement seeks, through education and prevention, to promote a lifestyle based on respect for the environment. Here the International Olympic Committee and the various international federations and national olympic committees are striving to ensure that every sporting

event makes proper use of existing resources and is integrated into a more general programme of sustainable development.

The President: I thank His Serene Highness the Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco, for his statement.

His Serene Highness Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency The Right Honourable Jean Chrétien, Prime Minister of Canada.

The Right Honourable Jean Chrétien, Prime Minister of Canada, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Chrétien (Canada): Five years ago the nations of the world met in Rio to chart an ambitious course towards global sustainable development, development that would meet the economic, social and environmental needs of this and future generations.

We have come to this special session to renew our Rio commitments and to keep faith with those whose future depends on the wisdom of our choices and the results we deliver.

Since Rio, we have made progress in many areas: protecting the ozone layer, conserving straddling fish stocks and curbing pollution.

There is a growing global consensus that the environmental harm caused by some is a threat to all. Since Rio, we have shown what is possible when the nations of the world work together, but the fact is that some of our Rio goals still elude us.

The forests of the world continue to decline at an alarming rate. Sustainable forest management is a high Canadian priority. We are convinced that this special session presents a unique opportunity to achieve an international forest convention through the creation of an intergovernmental negotiating committee. Our Government believes that a strong, legally binding agreement that builds on the forest principles established at Rio is the best way to ensure the international will needed to reverse the tide of deforestation. A forest convention will also help Canada achieve its own forest management goals.

Canada, like most other industrialized countries, will not meet the year-2000 targets for stabilizing greenhouse gas emissions. The structure of our economy poses particular challenges in this regard, but the potential human and economic costs of unchecked climate change are simply too high for us not to take action now.

In Canada, our experience is that the best way to deal with a large, intractable problem is to work out a practical, step-by-step plan with realistic interim, medium-term targets. That is how we are eliminating our deficit.

Success is built on success, confidence breeds confidence and the process moves forward. We believe the same principle should apply to the problem of climate change. That is why our Government supports the establishment of legally binding, medium-term targets for post-2000 greenhouse gas reductions.

We also seek urgent regional and global action to address persistent organic pollutants. Toxic chemicals do not respect borders. They even travel from distant sources to contaminate Arctic food chains. This kind of threat can be fought only through international cooperation. Canada will do its part by strengthening its legislation on toxic chemicals and pollution prevention.

We are working to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity. We have a biodiversity strategy signed by every one of our provincial and territorial governments, as well as by the national Government. We will soon pass legislation to safeguard threatened and endangered species and their habitats within our federal jurisdiction, legislation reintroduced from our last session of Parliament.

(*spoke in French*)

We believe that the new strategic approach to managing pressing freshwater issues is a step in the right direction. We remain committed to improving the state of the oceans.

Creating new national parks and protecting our existing parks and reserves remains a high priority for me personally.

Sustainable development has become a constant concern of every one of our federal ministries and agencies. Each is required to come up with sustainable-development strategies, which will be audited by an independent commissioner.

Our task is not limited to making the environment healthier. It is clear that our environmental security is as important as our economic security.

Protecting the global food supply is beyond the power of one nation alone. Food supplies in Africa, for example, are threatened by the loss of fertile land. The Convention to Combat Desertification marks an important step towards the solution of this problem, and I reiterate Canada's offer to host its secretariat in Montreal.

(*spoke in English*)

For the least fortunate of the world, sustainable development without economic progress is but a hollow slogan. This is why Canada places poverty alleviation at the forefront of its international-assistance efforts.

Others before me have spoken of the tragic humanitarian and environmental damage caused by anti-personnel mines. We agree that this scourge can be addressed only on a global basis, and we are encouraged by the growing support which the Ottawa process has attracted. I urge all countries to join us in December, when a treaty banning the stockpiling, transfer, production and use of anti-personnel mines will be opened for signature.

We must also advance the international fight against poverty by encouraging more direct investment in developing countries.

All of society must be involved in our efforts, and I am proud that Canada has fostered broad participation in the sustainable-development work of the United Nations.

This special session is about realizing our Rio goals. Now we must go from Rio to results through a pragmatic, step-by-step approach. We must aim for measurable results and report on our progress, for it is not just admirable goals that will ensure a better world for our children — it is concrete results.

We have an obligation to create a healthier, cleaner world for our children, for our grandchildren and for future generations. The journey will not be smooth, but it is a journey we must finish together.

The President: I thank the Prime Minister of Canada for his statement.

Mr. Jean Chrétien, Prime Minister of Canada, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Jules Albert Wijdenbosch, President of the Republic of Suriname.

Mr. Jules Albert Wijdenbosch, President of the Republic of Suriname, was escorted to the rostrum.

President Wijdenbosch: Allow me at the outset to affirm that we are deeply honoured to be able to contribute to the successful outcome of this crucial special session on the implementation of Agenda 21.

The Rio Conference on Environment and Development was an expression of the political consensus and commitment of the entire international community to address the pressing problems of sustainable development on a global scale, based upon the underlying spirit and principle of common yet differentiated responsibilities.

This spirit of global solidarity not only must be preserved but must be pushed forward to new dimensions of thought and practice. My Government therefore reiterates its commitment fully and effectively to implement the Rio action programme for sustainable development, adopted in 1992. This programme, known as Agenda 21, remains, in our view, a valued framework for Governments, as well as for the private sector and civil society. Indeed, a comprehensive approach addressing problems of poverty and the improvement of the quality of life in a holistic manner should remain the prime target of our future endeavours.

Five years have passed, during which time we have had the opportunity to evaluate the programme. We have had five years to develop and implement feasible plans of action. This puts us in a position to make an in-depth assessment of what has to be done most urgently, or on a medium-term or long-term basis. In this context, we would like to refer to the national report submitted by the Republic of Suriname prior to this meeting.

I intend to use this opportunity to present the Assembly with an outline of the implementation of Agenda 21 at the national level. Suriname is blessed with vast areas of underpopulated land covered with virgin rain forest, offering an untapped wealth of biodiversity. In our resolve to address the present and future needs of our population through the exploitation of the rain forest in a responsible manner, we have attracted the attention of many Governments and non-governmental institutions that questioned our ability to ensure the sustainable use of our natural resources.

Amidst increased international interest in Suriname's rain forest, after numerous critical reports and analyses, what any intense scrutiny and objective review must reveal — and what we can proudly and emphatically state today — is that Suriname's well-earned reputation for the judicious and sustainable use of its natural resources is still in place. We have focused upon policy development, legal instruments, institutional strengthening, human resource development and effective budgetary and donor financing of these activities. So far we have formulated, or are in the process of formulating, the following programmes: a National Environmental Action Plan, an Integrated Forest Sector Study, a Strategy on the Use of Non-Renewable Resources, a National Tourism Strategy and Land-Use Planning.

In addition, a National Environmental Agency was recently set up under the direct supervision of the President of the Republic of Suriname. These programmes and plans of action have become part of Suriname's commitment to implementing Agenda 21.

In full acknowledgment of these endeavours, we must state that our programmes aimed at the eradication of poverty and the improvement of the quality of life for the majority of our people have not been as successful as we would have wished.

We must admit that our efforts, in concert with and with the full cooperation of the international community, as far as the environment is concerned, do not show a proper balance with the results we have achieved in providing better food, better education, better health care and proper housing conditions for the majority of our people.

There are many reasons for this lack of balance, which is critical, since human resources are indispensable for any efforts we make to achieve the goal of sustainable development.

Time restrictions prevent me from elaborating on the variety and the complexity of the causes that have led to the lack of balance just mentioned. Therefore, I will limit my comments to the following problem: our inability to improve our export capacity in a substantial way, both from a quantitative and a qualitative point of view, and to secure adequate foreign-currency earnings.

Small-scale economies like Suriname's, as well as those of the majority of the Caribbean States, have a hard time conquering and maintaining international market positions since we are faced with powers against which we can compete only if we make great sacrifice. Over the past two years we have been confronted with a serious decrease in our rice exports to the European market.

Suriname has not been able to deal with the claims filed with the European Community by its rice-producing member States.

We, and our sister nations of the Commonwealth Caribbean, face a similar problem in the field of the export of bananas. In this context, we are confronted with obstacles from both the member States of the European Community and other industrialized countries that are using the World Trade Organization to dismantle our preferential position in the European market.

In our opinion, the past five years of evaluation and implementation of Agenda 21 have taught us at least two vital lessons.

First and foremost the international community in general, and the industrialized nations in particular, have not been able to apply the principle of shared responsibility, especially as far as small economies are concerned. We have experienced indifference and a lack of attention to the vulnerability of small-scale societies in an economic, political and military sense.

We therefore propose that the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States be followed up by a series of regional and sub-regional meetings dealing with the triangle of economic development, the preservation of the environment and the eradication of poverty, with a view to improving the quality of life for the majority of our people. We are convinced that the establishment of the regional integration fund, as proposed by the Caribbean Heads of State and Government, will certainly contribute to the realization of this lofty ideal.

Secondly, the ongoing globalization process, including the liberalization of the movement of goods, services and capital, should be accepted as a fact. At the same time, Suriname strongly believes that we should strike a proper balance between the liberalization of the world economy and the capacity of the emerging world to develop communities and nations that historically have not been in a position to concretize nation-building in the context of political, administrative and socio-economic stability.

In closing, I take this opportunity to call upon all States Members of the United Nations to make a massive effort towards renewed international cooperation and global partnership in support of greater sustainable development in the world, in particular in developing countries, and to make Agenda 21 everybody's Agenda, at all levels of human society.

The President: I thank the President of the Republic of Suriname for his statement.

Mr. Jules Albert Wijdenbosch, President of the Republic of Suriname, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Vytautas Pakalniškis, Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania.

Mr. Vytautas Pakalniškis, Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Pakalniškis: (Lithuania) (*spoke in Lithuanian; English text furnished by the delegation*): Global processes of human development, affecting the environment we live in, are challenging every nation and State as never before. Five years ago, the Conference in Rio de Janeiro established at the highest political level a foundation for a global partnership. This partnership is vitally important in seeking harmony between the human and natural worlds, compatibility between economic and social development and the preservation of the quality of our environment for future generations.

Today we are gathered at the special session of the United Nations General Assembly once more to affirm our political responsibilities to seek common ground on issues of environmental protection and social development. As we celebrate the five-year anniversary of the Conference on Environment and Development, it is just as important to review progress towards its implementation and to discuss how the Rio Conference documents are being implemented.

Even at the Conference in 1992 an understanding was reached among all the participants that environmental protection and economic development are complementary, like two sides of a coin. However, we are still discussing what indicators properly evaluate the sustainability of development. One thing is clear: efforts to ensure sustainable development must first be made at local and national levels, taking into consideration regional and global goals. It is also clear that we can achieve sustainable development only by action in various sectors: energy, transport, industry, agriculture, trade and other activities, supported by relevant legislation and financial resources, as well as by adequate public participation.

Mr. Erwa (Sudan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The basic principles of environmental protection, grounded in sustainable development, were set out in Lithuania by our Environmental Protection Act of 1992, as amended in 1996. This Act stresses that the policy and practice of sustainable development must guide public and private interests towards improvement of environmental quality and must encourage those who possess natural resources to look for methods and means of preventing or reducing negative environmental impact and of making production environmentally friendly. Environmental protection is based on comprehensive, accurate and timely ecological information and favourable conditions for active public participation in the decision-making process.

During the last five years Lithuania has adopted many legal acts reinforcing the requirements of sustainable development in various fields of activity and has prepared several programmes of action for their implementation. The Lithuanian Environmental Strategy Act and Action Plan, both confirmed by the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania in 1996, are comprehensive and integrated documents of the greatest importance. Significant components of national sustainable development are also provided for in the National Programme on Development of Energy Consumption Efficiency, the National Programme on Transport and Environmental Protection of 1992 and the Hazardous Waste Management Programme of 1993.

Since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, significant progress has been made in the implementation of Rio conventions and other activities related to global issues. In 1994 Lithuania acceded to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. In 1995 this Protocol was ratified, and a programme for phasing out ozone-depleting substances in Lithuania under the Montreal Protocol was prepared and adopted. In 1995 the inventory of greenhouse gases was completed, and the Framework Convention on Climate Change was ratified. In 1996, the National Programme on Implementation of this Convention was endorsed by the Government. In 1995 the Convention on Biological Diversity was ratified.

Recently, the National Biological Diversity Action Plan was prepared as a concrete programme for the implementation of the Rio Convention. The National Biological Diversity Action Plan is related mainly to the preservation of the most valuable Lithuanian natural sites, ecosystems and their fragments. The protected areas cover 11.5 per cent of Lithuanian territory.

Forests are one of the most important elements for the preservation of biological diversity. They play an important role in the regulation of climate and atmospheric processes, as well as in the formation of river basins. In 1992, the legally non-binding Forest Principles were prepared and approved by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. It was expected that this document would be developed into a convention on forest protection. We fully support and welcome this idea. We also support the opinion of the European Union, as expressed at the fifth session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, that the conservation, management and development of all types of forests are indispensable and that a global convention should be prepared to meet this goal.

I would like to stress that Lithuania is actively reviewing its laws and action plans to take into account a principal goal of Lithuanian political strategy: successful preparation for European Union membership. Newly prepared legal acts are in conformity with European Union directives and requirements. The Law Office established by the Ministry of European Affairs facilitates this process. In 1996 the National Action Programme for Law Harmonization was adopted by the Lithuanian Government. The Programme sets the priorities necessary for the successful implementation of the European Union White Paper requirements. This year we expect a long-term integration strategy and action programme in the environmental protection sector to be fully prepared.

In closing, I would like to emphasize the significance of support from countries of the Baltic region, especially Denmark, Sweden and Finland, in the implementation of the Lithuanian environmental strategy and the Agenda for the twenty-first century at the national level. The assistance of these countries has facilitated implementation of the European Union pre-accession requirements and the national priorities of the Lithuanian Environmental Strategy Act. We are especially thankful for their assistance in the construction of municipal waste-water treatment facilities. We expect river-water quality to improve significantly after the main waste-water treatment plants are completed in two to three years.

The cooperation between the Baltic Sea region countries is very positive and fruitful. Active partnership is based on principles of the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area and on bilateral agreements. At present, the subregional programme of Agenda 21 — the Baltic agenda for the twenty-first century — is being readied. Finland and Lithuania are responsible for sustainable management in the forestry sector of this programme. We expect to prepare this programme by the time of the 1998 conference of European Environmental Protection Ministers. This will be a significant programme applicable to the specific conditions of our subregion and designed in accordance with principles of sustainable development — a tangible contribution to the implementation of Agenda 21.

The President: I thank the Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania for his statement.

Mr. Vytautas Pakalniškis, Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Janez Drnovšek, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia.

Mr. Janez Drnovšek, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Drnovšek (Slovenia): Five years have past since we met in Rio de Janeiro to share our concern for the future of the world and to agree on policies to make our future better. For Slovenia, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) was the occasion of its first appearance within the United Nations family and an outstanding opportunity to prove its readiness to take part in global partnership.

This time, we gather to reconfirm our commitment to Agenda 21, the world's blueprint for sustainable development. Much has been done since then, yet even more remains to be done.

One year after UNCED, Slovenia adopted its basic Environmental Protection Act, which reflects the fundamental principles of Rio documents. At the same time, we have been participating in international programmes to protect and preserve international waters, air, wildlife and other treasures of our world. As a

European and alpine country, Slovenia attaches particular importance to international efforts for the protection of the alpine environment and is cooperating intensely within the International Convention for the Protection of the Alps.

Our policy reflects the specific environmental features of Slovenia. More than half of our territory is covered with forests. That is why we have a keen interest in international action for the protection of forests and the adoption of sustainable forest management practices. Slovenia has a very high degree of biodiversity, which has to a very great extent been preserved until now. It is our responsibility to guard this wealth for us all and for future generations. We are aware of the need to take care of our common heritage and to accept measures to preserve its richness.

However, neither in our country nor in other parts of the world can the question of the environment be dealt with separately from the economic and social components of development. In order to ensure that development be sustainable, we should bring together the priorities in all three fields and try to achieve the best possible outcomes. My Government is convinced that integrating agendas is a prerequisite for achieving cross-sectoral sustainable development.

A number of major United Nations conferences have substantially raised awareness of the centrality of social and economic issues to environmentally sustainable development. As the outcomes of these conferences continue to be implemented in an integrated manner, they will also give tangible expression to the objectives of UNCED and its main outcome, Agenda 21.

Action by Governments is not enough. All sectors of society should be involved in the development and implementation of national and local sustainable development programmes. They can be successful only if civil society accepts the goals of these programmes as its own goals and if local authorities are given proper instruments and means for their implementation. Such a partnership within each country should take into full account respect for human rights and basic freedoms. Full and just sustainable social and economic development cannot be achieved without striving towards peace, democracy, solidarity, gender equality and the eradication of poverty. Similarly, partnership within the international community is also needed.

The issue of financing sustainable development remains a matter of prime concern. In order to help the developing countries to meet their commitments under Agenda 21, further financial assistance is needed. The transfer of environmentally sound technology and know-how from developed to developing countries should be given the necessary attention. The Rio commitment to reach the 0.7% official development assistance target should be reaffirmed. However, official development assistance can be fully effective only as a supplement to domestic financial, technological and human resources in developing countries themselves.

In the Rio Declaration, we pointed out the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities of countries in this regard. We should deal with it with a special concern for the needs and sensibilities of the least developed States.

Our efforts to promote sustainable development depend to a great extent on the existence of dynamic and effective international cooperation. We commend the Commission on Sustainable Development, which has proved to be a successful mechanism for UNCED follow-up. It has also proved to be a valuable forum for the exchange of experiences on the implementation of Agenda 21 at the national level. The United Nations Environment Programme, which celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary this year, should be strengthened in order to be able to provide a clear and authoritative voice on environmental contributions to sustainable development.

The emission and concentration of greenhouse gasses continue to rise, regardless of the fact that many countries, including Slovenia, are parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC). There is a need to strengthen our commitment to meet the objectives of the Convention. The Berlin Mandate was an important step, but only the first in this direction; the third Conference of the Parties to the FCCC, to be held in Kyoto this year, will be another occasion for us to adopt a legally binding instrument that would upgrade the Berlin Mandate and clearly quantify the limitations of the emissions of greenhouse gasses. In this regard, Slovenia welcomes the agreement by the European Union to a phased reduction of these emissions.

Slovenia encourages the international community to strengthen its efforts for sustainable development challenges particular to small island developing States.

Furthermore, we believe that the use of renewable sources of energy should be increased. Energy-related research and development efforts should be given the

necessary support. Relevant resources to promote energy conservation should also be mobilized.

We share the common concern for the preservation of freshwater reserves, which are a finite resource and could soon be the major limiting factor of the world's economic development. We strongly support strengthening international cooperation for the protection of freshwater reserves and for integrated water-supply programmes and projects. Much greater emphasis should be given to the sharing of information and technical assistance, as well as to the provision of adequate financial resources, among Governments and international institutions, such as the Global Environment Facility.

In conclusion, I should like to reiterate that Slovenia will continue to contribute to solving the main global environmental problems. We believe commitments are important but not sufficient. Concrete projects and instruments for their implementation are, in my opinion, crucial for the achievement of the goal that we all share — sustainable development.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia for his statement.

Mr. Janez Drnovšek, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. David Oddsson, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iceland.

Mr. David Oddsson, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iceland, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Oddsson (Iceland): Environmental issues have in recent years increasingly been coming to the fore in international affairs. It is clearly recognized that pollution and environmental degradation transcend traditional dividing lines between States and that global commitment is required to combat such problems. It is furthermore recognized that environmental considerations must be integrated into decision-making on social and economic issues in the widest context.

The Rio Summit and the adoption of Agenda 21 inspired Governments to cooperate in both global and regional forums. They have also encouraged national Governments and local authorities, as well as non-governmental organizations and businesses, to develop strategies and means to meet new criteria. The Government of Iceland is committed to sustainable development and has for its part adopted a national strategy and a programme of action to attain the goals which have been set.

But as we gather here to assess the progress since Rio, this is clearly not the time for complacency. The achievements have truly been modest compared to the tasks that lie ahead and the expectations that were raised at the Rio Summit. Today we must urgently face prospects which threaten to become grim realities. I mention only climate change and increased marine pollution, which threaten to have adverse and irreversible implications worldwide. A new report on the environmental situation in the Arctic shows a dangerous accumulation of pollution, originating from remote parts of the world, in the Arctic region.

Every effort must be made to turn the tide. We have seen positive and tangible results in the past few years, and we are pinning our hopes on the entry into force of conventions such as those on climate change, biological diversity and desertification.

These positive developments rest to a large extent on the consensus that has been forged among the nations of the world about the need to give priority to the environment. I am convinced that we must build on this consensus in our future endeavours, but I fear that it may erode unless we proceed with caution and common sense. I am referring in particular to the harvesting of living natural resources and to the interests, rights and obligations of States to utilize their resources in a sustainable manner. This right has to be respected.

If we wish to preserve and reinforce our consensus on environmental priority, we must refrain from being influenced by simplistic and misleading propaganda which ultimately serves to undermine it. It is very important to work with non-governmental organizations, but it is equally important to resist the pressure of unaccountable conservationist groups that wish to sever the vital link between environment and economy and which view the environment less in terms of a resource for human sustenance and more as a nature preserve.

We cannot afford unnecessary divisions. We must enact the principle of sustainable development rather than let our attention be diverted from the real and serious environmental challenges that must be dealt with.

Next year is dedicated by the United Nations to the oceans. In the view of my Government, this will give us a valuable opportunity to review matters related to the marine environment, which to date have not been given the consideration they so richly deserve.

The protection of the marine environment and the sustainable use of all marine resources must be seen as a priority issue. The marine ecosystem must be protected from waste and toxic chemicals, and particular attention should be paid to persistent organic pollutants, which are a grave threat to human health and to the environment. We should complete without delay a global, legally binding agreement to address this serious problem, and the Washington Programme of Action, which aims to limit pollution from land-based activities, should be fully implemented.

The health of the marine ecosystem will determine whether the oceans can continue to serve as a lasting food source for all of humanity. As was confirmed at the World Food Summit in Rome last November, we will need to explore all possible means and make better use of available resources if we are to succeed in securing adequate nutrition for the world's rapidly growing population in the decades to come.

To this end we are continuing to improve the utilization of the living and renewable resources in the sea. It has been pointed out that many fish stocks have been inadequately managed and that some are in a poor state, which in some cases may be directly related to economic subsidies to the fisheries sector. We must, however, also acknowledge the substantial progress that has been made in many areas in adapting allowable catches to scientifically approved and sustainable levels. More and more countries have come to realize that, in the medium and long term, economic and ecological goals are inseparable.

Further advances must be made, and Iceland is prepared to lend its support. Last month, Iceland and the United Nations University signed an agreement on the permanent establishment of the University's Fisheries Training Programme in Iceland, set to enrol students as early as next year. We have high expectations that the Programme will help to secure a more professional fisheries management on a global scale and that developing countries in particular may benefit from it.

Since the Rio Summit, important instruments to guide international cooperation in the field of fisheries have been agreed. The Agreement on straddling and highly migratory fish stocks is of great importance, building on and complementing the Convention on the Law of the Sea, which remains the framework on which nations base their regional cooperation and resolve their disputes.

In the view of the Government of Iceland, the Convention on the Law of the Sea will continue to be the basis of international cooperation on the utilization of marine resources and the protection of the marine environment. The role of the Commission on Sustainable Development will be to provide a general overview, to issue recommendations and to encourage international consultation on matters concerning the oceans.

Our gathering here in New York is timely. We have recognized that so far inadequate progress has been made in many areas. Most importantly, we have also reaffirmed our commitment to environmental priority and sustainable development, as a guiding principle for our renewed and strengthened future efforts.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Iceland for his statement.

Mr. David Oddsson, Prime Minister of Iceland, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. José María Figueres, President of the Republic of Costa Rica.

Mr. José María Figueres, President of Costa Rica, was escorted to the rostrum.

President Figueres (*interpretation from Spanish*): Five years after the Earth Summit in Rio, I come here to comply with a commitment to achieve a better planet. During the second half of this century, our development goals were determined by cold-war assumptions. Now, that is history. Today, as we build the new world of the global economy on the threshold of a new millennium, we have new guidelines by which to adapt our old developmental goals: Agenda 21, which was adopted at Rio five years ago.

Now we must ask: Are we complying? Today I can testify that Costa Rica, with great effort and resolve, is complying. The Rio mandate invited us to go beyond a simple exercise in conservation. It proposed a change in our development model. On 9 May 1994, the first day of

my Administration, we convened a select group of Costa Rican and international experts to debate our overall proposal. No longer satisfied with short-term objectives and isolated development efforts which had ceased to meet the challenges of the future, we launched a new platform for sustainable development, calling for simultaneous efforts in the economic, social and environmental fields.

In the economic area, the goal was macroeconomic balance to increase savings levels and additional investment possibilities. In the social area, the objective was increased investment in the well-being of our people, to enable them to develop their potential, with a social network that would guarantee the quality of life of all Costa Ricans. In the environmental area, the goal was a vigorous alliance with nature, by which we could use our natural resources today without threatening their availability tomorrow.

This is a good opportunity to acknowledge the efforts made by my fellow Costa Ricans, and to thank them. I would like to share some of our achievements.

In the very first months of our Administration we created the Sustainable Development Council, with the support of numerous non-governmental organizations and civil society, in compliance with the Rio commitment. Our Congress ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

In the area of climate change, we have experienced a net decrease in emissions, and in biodiversity we have carried out a complete inventory of what our country possesses.

With the support of the United Nations we are preparing a comprehensive land-development proposal with four categories: agriculture, forestry, urban and industrial development, and national parks and protected areas. This plan will be complete in December.

Our energy policy goals call for the exclusive use of clean and renewable sources of energy by the year 2010. In addition, we are implementing conservation and demand-side programmes, with reductions of up to more than 5 per cent in total consumption of electricity.

We have eliminated lead from our gasoline, resulting in decreased lead levels in the blood of the population. We are now seeking to eliminate sulphur from our diesel fuels, and have begun an ambitious national transport programme promoting electric vehicles.

We have introduced important reforms in our educational system aimed at improving the quality and coverage of public education. By the end of this year, 50 per cent of our elementary school population and 100 per cent of our high school students will have access to school computer labs. Today, we are teaching our young people two languages beginning in first grade. We are gradually becoming a bilingual country, thereby improving our ability to compete more effectively in the global economy.

Some years ago we began to set aside large parts of our territory for national parks and biological reserves. Today these areas cover 30 per cent of our land and are part of our national system of conservation areas. A few years ago our country developed the expression "ecotourism". Today we — a country with a population of 3.5 million — welcome 700,000 tourists a year, attracted mainly by the wonders of our parks and reserves.

With only 52,000 square kilometres, Costa Rica is the natural home to more than 500,000 species of plants, animals and microorganisms, representing 5 per cent of the total biodiversity of the planet; we have taken to calling our conservation areas biodiversity factories. Our National Institute of Biodiversity was awarded the Prince of Asturias Prize in Spain for its pioneering efforts in science and technology.

Today we are harnessing the potential of our trees to eliminate carbon emissions in the atmosphere through the process of photosynthesis. By selling this capacity to clean the atmosphere on commodity market exchanges, Costa Rica is experiencing a net decrease in emissions and is thus a responsible global citizen.

Fifty years ago my country took a giant step forward when we decided to abolish our army. Today, we are taking another giant step forward by combining the economic, social and environmental aspects of our development with a long-term vision, in order to guarantee a more promising future and sustainable well-being to new generations of Costa Ricans.

In close coordination with our Central American neighbours, we are working harder than ever to insure progress in our region, which is united in our Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America.

Agenda 21 and our sustainable development programme combine the imagination and creativity of a

new generation of citizens, more conscious of present concerns, and a new leadership, together building a new utopia, new ideals and a new political agenda.

Yes, Costa Rica is complying with Agenda 21.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I thank the President of the Republic of Costa Rica for his statement.

Mr. José María Figueres, President of Costa Rica, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Ricardo Alarcón de Quesada, Speaker of the National Assembly of People's Power of the Republic of Cuba.

Mr. Ricardo Alarcón de Quesada, Speaker of the National Assembly of People's Power of the Republic of Cuba, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Alarcón de Quesada (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Five years after the Rio Summit, the problems for which solutions were promised are now more severe. The hope for such solutions disappeared along with millions of hectares of destroyed forests and thousands of annihilated animal and plant species. These were dissolved in the polluted seas and rivers and in the unbreathable atmosphere, buried in the barren soils and in the deserts.

Carbon-dioxide emissions have increased in several industrialized countries, and it is forecast that very few of them will be able to stabilize their emissions of greenhouse gases at 1990 levels by the year 2000.

If Rio seemed to be the perilously late awakening of the world's conscience, what has come since only serves to demonstrate the extremes that can be reached by the senseless selfishness of a system that sacrifices everything for the gain of a few.

The poor multiply and become poorer. Among them, women and children are growing in number. Three hundred and fifty-eight persons have assets greater than the combined annual income of countries inhabited by 2.5 billion people — almost 45 per cent of the world's population.

There are very few developed countries that have contributed the meagre 0.7 per cent of their annual gross national product as official development assistance, which continues to decrease and today has reached its lowest level since 1983.

In addition, the third world's annual foreign-debt servicing is more than three times as much as that assistance. In this way, and through unequal trade and capital drain, poor countries finance the opulence and squandering of others.

Things have not changed much. The old colonialism persists and cannot be concealed by the deceptive rhetoric of globalization. Its true essence remains the subjugation of the world. International cooperation is an empty phrase. Imperialism breaks sovereignties apart and crushes rights all over the world.

How can we expect fair treatment for other States if the most powerful State insults this Organization and all its Members? The one that benefits most, as the site of the Headquarters of the United Nations, is attempting not to pay what it owes the Organization, to force others to assume part of its fees and to impose inadmissible conditions upon the Organization. Since when is the United Nations owned by its main debtor?

For those who amassed their wealth through the exploitation of the third world, it is not really a question of lending assistance, but of returning part of what they plundered. They likewise have the obligation to pay their ecological debt, as the parties mainly responsible for the deterioration of the environment through their irrational patterns of consumption and waste. It is up to them to change radically their patterns instead of spreading them, as they so irresponsibly do, to the privileged minorities of poor countries. What they should transfer to underdeveloped countries are environmentally rational technologies under the preferential terms defined at Rio.

Far from seeing them fulfil their commitments, we witness them ignoring what they subscribed to five years ago and, what is even worse, trying to change those commitments and set new and arbitrary restrictions for underdeveloped countries that will make sustainable development more difficult.

Capitalist greed is the principal cause of the unjust world and of the severe damage to nature which today threaten human survival. It is absurd to try to cure those ills with a cult-like worship of the market, with more selfishness and with more capitalism.

In order to preserve nature it is essential to transform completely relations between nations and among men. The Earth will live on only if we are capable of attaining justice and solidarity.

If sustainable development is a hard goal for the third world to reach in the current circumstances, for Cuba it proves even harder. We persist in our effort to reach it amid the economic, political and even biological war unleashed against Cuba by the United States, which threatens our people's right to life and is carried out in disregard of the resolutions of the Assembly, violating international law and the sovereignty of other nations.

The powerful call on us to give up what we agreed upon at the Summit five years ago. Instead of urgently putting into practice the Rio programme of action, they invite us simply to abandon it. We must reject and denounce that attempt. Hegemonism and arrogance cannot prevail over a humanity that has a right to the future and must and will fight to save it. The powerful must remember that they dwell on the same planet as their victims, and that if they insist on destroying it their children and ours will meet the same fate.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I thank the Speaker of the National Assembly of People's Power of the Republic of Cuba for his statement.

Mr. Ricardo Alarcón de Quesada, Speaker of the National Assembly of People's Power of the Republic of Cuba, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen, President of the Republic of Guatemala.

Mr. Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted to the rostrum.

President Arzú Irigoyen (*interpretation from Spanish*): What is today our territory was very different 50 million years ago. It emerged exactly 50 million years ago from the sea, together with a portion of the present-day Mexican State of Chiapas and the countries of El Salvador, Honduras and half of the northern part of Nicaragua. For the next 40 million years, this newborn land constituted the southern limit of America. During that entire period flora and fauna capable of thriving in a southern region migrated to this land.

Forty million years later, the rest of the Central American isthmus rose from the sea and linked with South America, thereby completing the bridge joining together what is now the American continent. Since then, migrating flora and fauna from the south have also come to our land.

The distinctive features of our territory, with its deep folds, ecological niches, mountain chains and volcanoes enabled species and varieties that in other latitudes would have had to compete in a process of natural selection to find areas in which they could survive. This was more or less how the extraordinary biological diversity of our land came to be.

In the *Popol Vuh*, the sacred book of the Maya-Quiché culture, it is recorded that the founding fathers came to the land of Paxil And Cayalá, the land of the yellow and the white corn, where the abundance of fruit and honey could sustain entire migrant populations. On heading south from Mexico, the Spanish conquistadors learned that they were on the way to Cuauhtemalán, which in the Náhuatl language means "the land of the forests". Indeed, over 70 per cent of our territory is forest land.

Gradually, man's survival needs began to transform this natural sanctuary, almost imperceptibly at first. Over time, this process gathered momentum, with the pristine forests giving way to fields of corn, our civilizing grain. As Guatemalan territory became linked to the world market, the population grew and technologies became more sophisticated, the process of transformation intensified until it began to ravage large areas.

Nevertheless, until about 25 years ago, one third of our territory, El Petén, was covered in tropical rain forest that was the seat of Mayan culture and remained virtually untouched. At the time, that vast area was home to about 25,000 people. Now, over 350,000 people live there out of necessity. The tropical forest is one fifth of what it used to be, and the process is continuing at an alarming rate.

From this rostrum I wish to draw the world's attention to the global tragedy of the deterioration of our environment, especially in El Petén, one of the last lungs of the American continent, where there is still a biological treasure trove that no doubt holds certain keys to the survival of humankind.

Just 10 years ago, a report that marks a milestone in contemporary history was published. In 1987 "Our Common Future", or the Brundtland report, spelt out the concept of sustainable development and made it clear that environmental protection and long-term economic growth are not incompatible, but complementary, and even interdependent. Therefore, if we want to give the future a chance, we must cooperate in the essential task of eradicating poverty, which is an essential prerequisite for sustainable development.

Today, five years after Rio, we, the leaders of the nations of the world, are meeting once again, not just to congratulate ourselves on what we have accomplished, but also critically to assess what we have not achieved. We have only one Earth on which to live, and to live together.

Allow me to give the Assembly a brief account of what my country has achieved in terms of fulfilling the commitments made at the Earth Summit. Since 1996 Guatemala has had its own Agenda 21, which can be described as a general strategy for comprehensive and multisectoral action for the sustainable development of our country and is coordinated with the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America that we in our region are promoting.

Within this framework of action, my Government has broadened and deepened our environmental legislation, putting it at the service of Guatemalan society. It has created efficient financial mechanisms that have their own resources, such as the Guatemalan Fund for the Environment. It has strengthened environmental institutions and set up Sustainable Development Councils under the National System of Urban and Rural Development Councils, from the national to the municipal level, and soon at the local level as well.

I would like to stress the relationship between means of survival and nature conservation. Experience has shown that there is no human power capable of imposing respect for the natural environment without giving people choices regarding their lives. This is not just impossible, it is also ethically unacceptable.

At present, the means available to us to resolve this dilemma are absolutely inadequate. The situation would be different if universal awareness of the environmental issue led to an international economic order that could equitably absorb the cost of protecting nature for the benefit of all humankind. What is unacceptable is to have mere conservationist policies that do not link rights and obligations: rights are for some, obligations for others.

I greatly appreciate the efforts made by the United Nations protect the environment, which is to say, to protect life. I trust that the wisdom of the human species will enable it to survive the disaster that its own patterns of consumption and development have brought about. We were given the Earth by our forebears, and we owe it to our children. Nature itself compels us to take concerted action. If we do not heed this mandate we shall all be embarking on the road to ruin.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I thank the President of the Republic of Guatemala for his statement.

Mr. Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, President of the Republic of Bolivia.

Mr. Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, President of the Republic of Bolivia, was escorted to the rostrum.

President Sánchez de Lozada (*interpretation from Spanish*): The subject of sustainable development always brings to my mind the words of a peasant who, on seeing his town destroyed by an avalanche caused by deforestation, said, "God always forgives, man sometimes, nature never."

The speeches that have been made by many Presidents yesterday and today have dramatically drawn attention to the inadequacy of our efforts to achieve sustainable development. If we continue in this manner, the day will not be far off when we will be punished by nature, which, as the peasant said, never forgives.

It is true that there are still differences of approach to this issue, but it is also true that these differences in no way justify the meagre progress that we have made, given that what remains to be done is constantly increasing while the time left in which to do it is growing shorter. Between the developmental approach of the developing countries, which are struggling to eliminate poverty at any cost, and the environmental approach of the industrialized countries, which want to prevent other countries from making the same mistakes of non-sustainability that they

have, there is still a great gap to be bridged. This meeting, along with the Rio Conference and the later Summit Conference on Sustainable Development held in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, provide a golden opportunity for us to seek consensus. This effort must be continued in Kyoto, and, following that, at the next Summit of the Americas, in Santiago, Chile.

Heads of State and Government, meeting in Miami at the Summit of the Americas in 1994, called for the holding of the Summit Conference on Sustainable Development, which took place in Santa Cruz, Bolivia two years later. There we issued the Declaration of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, and I believe it is worth recalling the terms of that Declaration today. It said that sustainable development is an integral whole, incorporating the economic, political and social dimensions, as well as a fourth — the environmental dimension. Sustainable development means understanding that while economic development is the engine, political and social development join with it to form a whole which, if it is to be sustainable, must also include the environmental dimension. Sustainable development also means recognizing the cultural plurality of our peoples. It means recognizing that the education of our children is the basis for all development. If development is to be sustainable, it must be democratic and participatory. In other words, its planning and management must involve the whole of society. Sustainable development is the responsibility of everybody. This does not exempt Governments from responsibility; rather, it emphasizes their responsibility in the global search for better countries and a better world. Indeed, sustainable development can come about only when we accept that it can be brought about only by the shared responsibility of people and of countries.

Fortunately, the cold war has finished. But we now face another war that may be even more devastating and perhaps even final: the war for sustainable development, which is the war we wage on poverty while taking care of our environment.

Solidarity, one of the resource of human nature, must be demonstrated on an urgent basis if humankind is to be rescued from the path down which irrationality and irresponsibility are leading us. But it must be an active, not just an idealistic, solidarity, funded by programmes of official development assistance, which, instead of being reduced every day, should be increased outright. Why? So as to protect what we hold most dear, what is closest to us: the lives of our children.

In my country we have fought some hard battles at the start of this war, which has been a quiet, democratic revolution to improve the quality of life for the Bolivian people. To this end we have established the Ministry of Sustainable Development and the Environment, as the strategic focus for development programmes. We have made democracy more democratic through popular participation and the administrative decentralization of the State. We are reforming our educational system to take into account the multicultural and multilingual reality of our country. And we are capitalizing public enterprises, which, without affecting the heritage of the Bolivian people, have made sizeable investments that are allowing us to return to our citizens what belongs to them through a system of pensions that is now universal.

But in waging the war for sustainable development, isolated efforts are not enough, however well intentioned and appropriate they may be. That is why we have the United Nations, which can and must set an example of international solidarity. The time for change has come. The new Secretary-General has been given the formidable task of reorganizing the United Nations. This restructuring must not bring changes that change nothing; it must not be just a bureaucratic reshuffling. This is the opportunity of the century for sustainable development to become the guiding light for the United Nations, leading this Organization to discharge with greater efficiency its role as the keeper of peace, justice and security in the world. From now on, every meeting of this Organization, small or large, must not discuss a single issue without taking into account that everything is closely related to sustainable development.

Let us hope that nature will consider forgiving us, that it will not punish us and that it will give us time to build a better world for our children and for our children's children.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I thank the President of the Republic of Bolivia for his statement.

Mr. Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, President of the Republic of Bolivia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Bernardo Ferraz, Minister for the Environment of Mozambique.

Mr. Bernardo Ferraz, Minister for the Environment of Mozambique, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Ferraz (Mozambique): It is with great satisfaction and expectation that we are here today to make a collective assessment of the implementation of the commitments assumed five years ago in Rio and to prepare ourselves to face the challenges lying ahead at the dawn of the next century.

We strongly believe that under the lucid guidance of the President of the General Assembly, and with the goodwill and collaboration of all of us, this session will be crowned with success.

The instruments prepared and adopted at the Earth Summit in 1992, in particular Agenda 21, are documents of transcending importance, for they defined guidelines aimed at promoting sustainable development.

Apart from defining the areas in which the concerted action of mankind should concentrate — *inter alia*, combating poverty, protecting and promoting human health, combating desertification and drought and promoting sustainable agriculture and rural development — the Earth Summit mobilized the support and attention of several actors of the international community, including those that in the past had shown indifference or considered themselves marginalized from the concert of nations.

A lot has happened since Rio. There is greater awareness and concern over environmental issues. However, judging from the commitments made at Rio, a lot remains to be done.

In keeping with the principles and recommendations adopted at the Rio Summit, extensive efforts have been made by the Government of Mozambique in elaborating policies and strategies to promote sustainable development at the national level. After the Earth Summit, the Government established the National Environment Commission, an institution established for the elaboration of policies and strategies for environmental protection. This institution initiated the process of drafting a National Environment Management Programme, which is Mozambique's environmental master plan and was recently adopted in a process involving a remarkably large sector of society, which turned out to be a participatory process unprecedented in the country.

The Programme identifies the major environmental and sustainable development concerns and challenges of the country. It contains the national environment policy and strategy and it proposes an umbrella environmental legislation. It also sets up major priorities for action in the area of management of natural resources by local communities, the management of the urban environment and the coastal zone. Other major areas of action currently in the process of implementation include a biodiversity country study, a climate change country study, a coastal zone management programme and the establishment of a centre for the transfer of technology.

In order to strengthen the role and responsibility of the Government in the implementation of the Rio recommendations, the Ministry for Coordination of Environment Affairs was established in 1994. Among other major tasks, the Ministry is concentrating its current efforts on increasing public awareness regarding environmental and sustainable development issues among specific target groups such as members of Government, representatives of educational institutions, non-governmental organization representatives, as well as women, youth and children, and in assisting entrepreneurs and the private sector in general to include environmental concerns in their development endeavours.

Efforts are also being made in reviewing and updating national legislation in order to make a more environmentally sound use of natural resources and also to fill in existing lacunae. A special highlight should be given to the current review of the legislation on land aimed at assuring the possession of land by citizens and in particular by the rural population. The law on local government recently approved by Parliament also constitutes a remarkable step forward, since it stresses the need for the sustainable management of human resources at the local level.

In the international arena, apart from the accession of Mozambique to the main international conventions on environment, it is worth mentioning the efforts developed by the community of Portuguese-speaking countries to work together in the implementation of Agenda 21, as well as important steps currently under way for the Southern African Development Community countries to harmonize and coordinate their environmental management actions.

As a member, Mozambique has been participating actively in the Commission on Sustainable Development, which has done excellent work in preparing for this Summit. We believe that the Commission's role should be strengthened.

The burden of external debt on the poor economies of developing countries hinders their development, thus

widening the gap between poor and rich, resulting in a vicious cycle of poverty which threatens the very continuity of life on our planet. Within the group of developing nations, there is another gap widening between the least-developed countries and the rest.

Poverty and environmental degradation are reciprocal. Poverty is absolutely incompatible with sound environmental protection and management. Despite the relatively significant achievements in the process of implementing Agenda 21, Mozambique is still facing many difficulties, most of which are related to the chronic problem of poverty. Poverty is perhaps the single most important barrier to sustainable development and rational environment management. Poverty in Mozambique is tightly linked to external debt, which is another major and widely recognized obstacle to sustainable economic growth and development.

In fact, Mozambique is being very successful in putting sustainability on paper in the form of policies and legislation and in establishing appropriate institutions. The reflection of all this in concrete reality cries for human and financial resources which the country does not possess.

Five years after Rio, we still need a great deal of technical and financial resources, means and tools for local capacity-building and community empowerment, in order to consolidate the country's achievements in the process of breaking the vicious circle of absolute poverty.

In conclusion, I would like to join previous speakers from both developing and developed countries in reiterating the appeal to the international community for more effective assistance in the process of sustainable economic growth and development. Five years after Rio, we think that we are now at a point of no return. However, this can be completely true only if resources are made available to turn the Rio decisions into actions with positive impact of significance to the peoples of our countries.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I thank the Minister for the Environment of Mozambique for his statement.

Mr. Bernardo Ferraz, Minister for the Environment of Mozambique, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Simon Upton, Minister for the Environment, Associate Minister for Foreign Affairs of New Zealand.

The Honourable Simon Upton, Minister for the Environment, Associate Minister for Foreign Affairs of New Zealand, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Upton (New Zealand): In reviewing the undertakings we made in Rio five years ago, I should like to comment on just two themes.

The first concerns globalization. Since Rio, the conclusion of the Uruguay Round and the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO) have formally recognized what travel and new communications technologies had already made inevitable: the globalization of the world's economy. Whatever power sovereign Governments may think they retain, citizens, travellers and traders are remaking the world in their own image.

In another era, it might have been assumed that globalization would mean more decision-making at a global level. In fact, almost the opposite applies. The integration of the world's economies is being driven not by bureaucratic elites or politicians, but by consumers. It is consumers, not trade or environment negotiators, who will increasingly determine what is and is not acceptable. These consumers are interested in the environmental conditions that apply both at home and abroad. And those conditions will always be local conditions.

Rio's tenth principle endorses the need to do things at the right level. It is New Zealand's contention that the future of sustainable development rests largely in local and national hands. Commitment to an eco-revolution will be bottom-up, if at all. This points to the responsibilities of Governments to act and enforce good environmental legislation at home. Trade rules, in turn, must be set in a context of good environmental management. With this in mind, I must underline the importance of the WTO's Committee on Trade and Environment.

We must be careful to distinguish between the global and the local, between problems that occur globally and problems that demand global solutions. If environmental damage is not contained within national borders, and if purely national institutions will be undermined by the non-compliance of others, then global solutions make sense.

In our view, forests do not satisfy this test. It is tough national measures, based on countries' own national interests — such as we have taken in New Zealand — that will make for forest sustainability. We do not see a

truly global problem requiring a legally binding global convention. New Zealand is an enthusiastic contributor to the Global Environment Facility and is one of the few countries which is increasing its overseas aid, with special emphasis on sustainable development. So obviously, we support the mobilizing of global resources and expertise to tackle widespread problems such as the sustainability of forest practices. But that does not inevitably take one down the road to a legally binding instrument.

The release of greenhouse gases and ozone-depleting substances, on the other hand, poses obvious challenges to the sustainability of the "global commons". It is here that legal instruments with truly global reach recommend themselves. But again, success will be dependent upon tightly focused, achievable goals. Progress under the Montreal Protocol has been assisted by having a clear outcome, an achievable timetable and affordable new technologies. This is in sharp contrast to efforts under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The Framework Convention is something of a test case for the future of multilateral environmental agreements. If it is to succeed, it must embrace measures that recognize the truly global nature of the problem. That will not occur if we cling to the idea that targets must be met behind national borders. That is a recipe for hugely uneven adjustment costs and so-called carbon leakage. There is nothing to be gained from shifting carbon-intensive production offshore only to import the end-products of those emissions. Looking green and being green are two different things.

New Zealand is absolutely clear that a legally binding instrument must make provision for emissions trading globally so that reductions are achieved at least cost to everyone. We accept that Annex I countries must take the first steps. But those steps have to lead somewhere and, in due course, include developing-country emissions.

We observe that the European Union is advocating a target of 15 per cent reductions by 2010 but allowing some of its member economies to increase their emissions by up to 40 per cent. Frankly, if it is good enough to pool the unders and overs within the European Union, it is good enough to do so within Annex I. In our view, agreement on trading emissions globally rather than within protected blocs is the only way to achieve least-cost, global solutions. The long-run political sustainability of more costly solutions is, frankly, doomed.

My second theme is the need to place the global environment agenda on a more businesslike basis. New Zealand is finding it increasingly difficult to contribute to the plethora of meetings that crowd the international agenda. We are awash with conventions and conferences. Key institutions are scattered around the globe for reasons that have little to do with good decision-making.

In our view, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) has to take hold of the multilateral agenda and streamline it. There needs to be a clear division of labour between the CSD and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Germany, Brazil, South Africa and Singapore have suggested a new global environment organization. If it simply seeks to add another layer to the United Nations system, we can see little point to it. If, on the other hand, a thorough-going rationalization of institutions is implied, then the proposal deserves serious consideration.

We are encouraged that Singapore, an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (APEC) economy, should be a joint sponsor of this declaration and in doing so take a leading environmental advocacy role. Singapore's brilliant success in transforming one of the poorest States in the world into one of the richest, within a single generation, contains important lessons for us all. It also underscores the fact that settled ideas about environmental leadership and burden-sharing are likely to undergo rapid changes, given that Singapore is now significantly richer than a number of developed countries, including New Zealand.

New Zealanders occupy a remote, sparsely populated corner of the planet. We are keenly aware that we must safeguard the unique ecosystems under our stewardship in New Zealand, the southern oceans and Antarctica. As a nation that is defined by its climate and marine settings, we are acutely sensitive to the interconnectedness of the world's biosphere. We know that we depend on the goodwill and resourcefulness of others to maintain it. We are committed to the eradication of the poverty that undermines it. That is why here, as elsewhere, we must start by focusing on the world as it works today. Sustainable development means that economic globalization must be matched with institutions, rules and responsibilities that match contemporary realities.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I thank the Minister for the Environment, Associate Minister for Foreign Affairs, of New Zealand.

The Honourable Simon Upton, Minister for the Environment, Associate Minister for Foreign Affairs of New Zealand was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I should like to appeal again to speakers to respect the seven-minute limit for their statements, because we have a long list of speakers.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

I give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Easton Douglas, MP, Minister of the Environment and Housing of Jamaica.

The Honourable Easton Douglas, MP, Minister of the Environment and Housing of Jamaica, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Douglas (Jamaica): Enshrined in the principles set forth at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) was the goal of creating

> "a global consensus and political commitment at the highest level on developmental and environmental cooperation". (*A/CONF/151/26 (Vol. I), Chapter 1, para. 1.3*)

We must today seek to reaffirm the spirit of partnership that we set out to achieve five years ago at Rio through the creation of new levels of cooperation among States and key sectors of society. We must ensure that all the commitments which were made in good faith are fulfilled.

Poverty remains one of the major hindrances to the achievement of sustainable development. The words of Jamaica's Prime Minister, The Right Honourable P. J. Patterson, are as valid today as they were at the Rio Conference in 1992. He said:

> "Poverty breeds pollution; pollution entrenches poverty. The result is a suffocating stranglehold of environmental degradation and human injustice." (*A/CONF/151/26/Rev.1 (Vol. III), p. 97*)

Given the task ahead, the dramatic downturn in official development assistance is a serious cause for concern. We cannot underestimate the importance of that assistance to many developing countries. Private capital flows and foreign direct investment cannot substitute for it.

We also recognize that the requisite levels of financial resources, appropriate institutional mechanisms and modes of disbursement should complement sound macroeconomic policies at the national level and provide an indispensable supplement to the domestic savings of developing countries.

Jamaica, as a small island developing State, reflects with satisfaction on the special recognition which Agenda 21 accorded the vulnerabilities which characterize our daily struggle to sustain our physical, economic and social well-being.

One of the positive achievements of this process was the convening of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in Barbados in 1994. That Conference demonstrated a commitment to translate the Rio ethic into reality.

The sustainable development of small island developing States is of global importance. It is, of course, much more than beaches and coral reefs. It is more than climate change and natural disasters. It is about the existence and survival of a particular group of States, and requires the forging of effective partnerships between peoples and Governments and between developed and developing countries.

We know that the effects of global warming are likely to be felt more directly by small island States, whose coastal areas may become submerged, whose protective coral reefs are threatened, and which will be subject to more frequent and stronger hurricanes. We are exposed to dangers from wastes being dumped in our seas. There are many areas of concern to us, not the least of which is tourism, on which many of our economies depend. Its sustainable management and development are critical to the health of our environment, as well as to our capacity for development.

At the national level, Jamaica continues to be committed to implementing Agenda 21, and this is tangibly demonstrated by some significant achievements. We have established the Natural Resources Conservation Authority as a strong environmental management and regulatory agency, and we have promulgated a comprehensive land policy, a forest policy, a national industrial policy, an energy policy and a national settlement strategy. Jamaica has acceded to most of the major environmental treaties and has developed new legislation for forest and water resource management. A

social investment fund has been established to reduce and, in due course, eradicate poverty, as we recognize that this is an essential requirement for sustainable development. Jamaica has also developed a national system of parks and protected areas, which will bring under protection between 25 and 30 per cent of the country's land area.

Recognizing the critical contribution of shelter to sustainable development, we have established the Programme for Resettlement and Integrated Development Enterprises, which we call Operation PRIDE, to provide land and affordable shelter for Jamaicans and to upgrade and regularize informal and squatter settlements. Operation PRIDE has received international recognition as a best-practice programme.

The sustainable development of the oceans and seas that surround us continues to be of concern for Jamaica, which serves as the headquarters of the International Seabed Authority as well as the headquarters of the Regional Coordinating Unit of the Action Plan of the Caribbean Environmental Programme. The careful conservation, management and regulation of the oceans and seas are of pivotal importance to the future economic and social development of the planet.

Non-governmental organizations in Jamaica have been active and have defined their role and priorities for the sound management of the environment. Equally, we believe that Governments, employers and workers' organizations must collaborate at the national and international levels if sustainable development is to be achieved.

The special session must re-emphasize the approach taken at Rio, which represents a proper paradigm for international cooperation: that of consensus-building, incorporating the special and differentiated needs of all countries and linkages between environmental and developmental concerns.

Given the global nature of the world economy, both the costs and the benefits of taking action will be shared by developing and developed countries. It is imperative, therefore, to dedicate ourselves to a real transfer of resources and tangible investment in programmes and projects aimed at achieving sustainable development. We must remember that investment in the environment can bring real economic returns. We must invest in sustainable development, including the development of our human resources, as this will bring real savings and may contribute to a sustainable livelihood for all.

Finally, in anticipation of the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations Environment Programme, we look forward to the strengthening of that institution so that it can provide the support prescribed by its mandate.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I thank His Excellency the Minister of the Environment and Housing of Jamaica for his statement.

The Honourable Easton Douglas, MP, Minister of the Environment and Housing of Jamaica, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I give the floor now to His Excellency Mr. Ohn Gyaw, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the National Commission for Environmental Affairs of Myanmar.

Mr. Ohn Gyaw, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the National Commission for Environmental Affairs of Myanmar, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Gyaw (Myanmar): We are here today to take stock of the implementation of Agenda 21 and of the progress achieved towards sustainable development. This special session provides us with an opportunity to assess where we have been and where we are headed. It will also be an opportunity to renew our commitment to the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and to the provisions of Agenda 21. In this regard, I wish to thank the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development for the excellent preparations it made for this special session during the recent meeting of the ad hoc open-ended intersessional working group and during the fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

It has now been 10 years since the emergence of the concept of sustainable development. It is now universally recognized also that integrating environment and development is a necessary condition for sustainable development. The recent report of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), "Global Environment Outlook", indicates that significant progress has been made in confronting environmental challenges at the local, national and regional levels. However, it also concludes that, despite progress, the pace at which the world is moving towards a sustainable future is simply too slow, that during the past decade the world environment has

continued to degrade, and that significant problems still persist.

Against this background, it is clear that although there is greater awareness and understanding of the conceptual basis of the relationship between environment and development, institutional, technical and financial problems arise in the attempt to integrate the two objectives. A large number of countries, including developing countries, have to a large degree played their part in implementing Agenda 21. Nevertheless, while some countries have registered good progress, there are still many others, especially the least-developed countries, which are lagging dismally behind.

The last five years have also made it abundantly clear that sustainable development programmes have inflicted considerable burdens on the developing countries. In order to secure comprehensive and effective national strategies and action plans, various national initiatives must be catalyzed by far-reaching multilateral and bilateral intervention and cooperation for implementation, by financing for sustainable development, by technology transfer and by capacity-building. However, it is sad to note that many developing countries are faced with a declining volume of official development assistance for capacity-building, infrastructure development, combatting poverty and environmental protection, which are required to achieve sustainable development. It is learnt that most developed countries have not yet fulfilled their commitment to allocate 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to official development assistance. It is therefore crucial that the international community, especially the developed countries, should reaffirm their commitments, including the achievement of the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product, as soon as possible and try to reverse the recent downward trend in the ratio of official development assistance to gross national product.

It is also crucial that support and assistance should be country-specific and project-oriented, taking into account the special needs and unique circumstances of each country. It is encouraging to note that in recent years a considerable number of subregional and regional programmes have been developed to translate the programme areas of Agenda 21 into portfolios of regional and subregional projects.

Agenda 21 calls for all nations to develop and put into effect their own national strategies, plans and policies for sustainable development. The Myanmar Government, for its part, has undertaken a number of important sustainable development initiatives in the past seven years, since the adoption of the market-oriented economic system. In 1990 the National Commission for Environmental Affairs was established as the national focal point and coordinating agency for environment matters. The National Environment Policy of Myanmar was also adopted in December 1994. It underlines the Government's commitment to establish sound policies in the utilization of water, land, forests, mineral, marine resources and other natural resources in order to conserve the environment and prevent its degradation.

The Myanmar selection system of forest management has enabled the country to extract its valuable forest resources on a sustainable basis. Though there has been a certain amount of deforestation, Myanmar is still abundant in forest resources, and 51 per cent of the country is still covered by forest.

Sustainable development and environmental management concerns are multidisciplinary and multisectoral in character. The Government of Myanmar has implemented several moves to introduce the concept of sustainable development. Although the United Nations agencies and some international organizations have supported these programmes, most of them are being carried out with our own resources.

Myanmar's efforts in the field of international cooperation to achieve sustainable development include the ratification of and accession to almost all the environment-related international conventions. To fulfil its commitments made at the historic Rio Summit in 1992, and to ensure that there is a progressive integration of environment and development in the country, the Government recently formulated a Myanmar Agenda 21.

Before concluding, I wish to reaffirm once again my country's commitment to undertake the implementation of Agenda 21 and the achievement of its noble aim towards sustainable development. The implementation of Agenda 21 calls for globally coordinated efforts. Wherever possible, Governments, the United Nations and intergovernmental agencies, international, regional and subregional organizations, non-governmental organizations and major groups must pool their financial and technical resources for the implementation of programmes and actions for sustainable development. I am convinced that international cooperative endeavours, such as the convening of this special session, will greatly facilitate our efforts towards achieving environmentally sound and sustainable development worldwide.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the National Commission for Environmental Affairs of Myanmar, for his statement.

Mr. Ohn Gyaw, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the National Commission for Environmental Affairs of Myanmar, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ivan Antonovich, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belarus.

Mr. Ivan Antonovich, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belarus was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Antonovich (Belarus): For centuries, the traditions of Belarusian statehood have been expressing the principles of ecologically reasonable behaviour in the form of natural philosophy, culture and practical action. Our ancestors, like those of other peoples, lived in harmony with nature. No doubt they behaved in such a way because of their dependence on the world around them.

The higher living standards of present generations press on the balance of the nature and stretch its self-regulating capacities. Maintaining the balance in the man/society/environment system is one of the main priorities of sustainable development, as this session has so clearly demonstrated.

The twenty-first century, having inherited technical sciences and industrial revolutions from the nineteenth century and the development of information technologies from the twentieth century, will become the century of control over development of the global man/society system, or else we will not survive. This is our desire, to survive. It is our task as well. The necessary prerequisites should be created today by common internationally meaningful action.

The Republic of Belarus experienced serious difficulties on the way towards democratic and market-oriented social and economic reforms. However, we have understood the necessity to elaborate a national strategy of sustainable development. It is hoped that such a strategy will give us an opportunity to take a look into the third millennium, to reveal the main directions and milestones for us to move towards a more productive society at peace with people and nature. The Government of Belarus is firmly committed to such a strategy.

In April 1997 in Minsk, the capital of the Republic, the Government of the Republic organized and conducted, with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme and the Economic Commission for Europe, the International Conference on Sustainable Development of Countries with Economies in Transition. Delegates from more than 30 countries and 33 international organizations took part in the Conference. The Minsk Conference not only provided for an all-round assessment of the problems currently faced by countries involved, but also identified the most prospective ways and mechanisms to solve them. Many important recommendations of the Minsk Conference were included in the draft final document of the present special session of the General Assembly.

We are painfully aware that there is a lot of hard work ahead of us, as well as a great many problems facing us at every step; but we have made our choice consciously and are not going to give up. The President and the Government have made the principles of sustainable development and the goals of securing socio-political and economic stability the cornerstone of their everyday activities.

The social and economic reforms that Belarus is now trying to achieve are measured against the principles of sustainable development. The objective function of the new society we are constructing includes providing for the growth of public well-being, a stable monetary system, a low unemployment rate and efficient environmental protection.

Belarus is in favour of forming an open system of international trade with the World Trade Organization at its core. I am sure that resolving the financial problems of sustainable development will be conditional on the openness of world markets in commodities and technologies. In this respect, I call upon the Governments of leading industrialized States to do their best to ensure a mutually beneficial exchange of goods and technologies and to facilitate cooperation on a global scale. Such a step could become one more important contribution to the common effort for trade in a healthy and stable environment for this and future generations.

When the prospects for environmental protection in the twenty-first century are taken up for careful scrutiny, the connection between development, peacekeeping, security and the environment is particularly striking. Efforts taken by the world community to cut down on arms and ban some of the most destructive types of

weapons made the world not just more economically sound, but also environmentally cleaner.

Nuclear issues undoubtedly have a distinct environmental dimension. Belarus suffered the most from the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, and we clearly realized what international support and solidarity are and what their absence means. Unfortunately, in the course of time the interest of the European countries and of the world community at large in the problem critical to the survival of our nation is somewhat on the wane. The necessity of spending almost 20 per cent of our national budget on mitigating the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster delays for years the realization of important long-term socio-economic programmes.

Belarus appeals for international cooperation in minimizing the after-effects of Chernobyl and we are also taking energetic measures at the national level. We receive the incoming assistance with genuine gratitude and we are sure that a radical change in the economic situation will be possible only after the technological reconstruction of industry and the power-production sector and the introduction of environmentally friendly industries. We are open to international as well as regional cooperation in these fields.

The Chernobyl problem will be acute for centuries, and I hope international assistance and cooperation will remain firm. I would also like to see the United Nations pay more attention to the problems of regional development. I think that this would enable the Organization to take account of specific social, economic and environmental problems faced by different countries. As previously mentioned, the United Nations should provide in every way possible for various regional arrangements to enhance their ties with international financial and trade institutions. The United Nations could similarly stimulate closer interaction and coordination between regional, subregional and transborder cooperative initiatives. In particular, Belarus advocates the elaboration, on the basis of regional and interregional cooperation, of legally binding codes of conduct in economic and environmental fields. I am sure that the realization of Agenda 21 in the regional and global context holds a promising future for all.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belarus for his statement.

Mr. Ivan Antonovich, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belarus, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Theodoros Koliopanos, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works of Greece.

Mr. Theodoros Koliopanos, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works of Greece, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Koliopanos (Greece): Let me first state that I fully subscribe to the statement already delivered by the President of the European Union.

Five years have elapsed since Rio. Progress has been made in certain areas, but there is still a long way to go. This is why this special session must renew and reinforce our commitment to face the daunting challenges ahead of us, with a view to making sustainable development a tangible reality.

Greece, with one third of the coastline of the whole Mediterranean basin and almost 3,000 islands, has a specific interest in promoting coastal-zone management, sustainable tourism, sustainable water management and policies to combat desertification and deforestation.

Coastal zones are recognized internationally as areas of particular importance. Their fragile environment, as well as economic and social pressures, call for integrated actions inspired by Agenda 21.

Islands are also faced with immense problems. The often limited local resources, the delicate interaction between human presence and natural ecosystems, as well as global threats, such as climate change, call for sustainable-development strategies. Greece has already undertaken specific actions to this end within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation process.

We must develop new and environmentally friendly forms of tourism, such as ecotourism, that would safeguard the environment and respect historical and cultural heritages.

A coordinated and holistic approach is all the more necessary in the case of the sustainable use of water. The

growing scarcity of fresh water means that it must be conserved, used properly and protected from pollution. In this connection, close cooperation is needed at the international and regional levels to ensure the rational use of water by different partners on the basis of common responsibility, especially with regard to transboundary waters. Let us not forget that in some areas, finding appropriate solutions for these problems is not merely a question of sustainable development but also a prerequisite for social stability and peace.

Deforestation and desertification pose an increasing threat to our planet. In the Mediterranean region — and especially in its southernmost parts — desertification is advancing due to diminishing rainfall, long periods of drought and frequent forest fires. Hence the need for the rapid ratification and implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

Greece, while being rich in forest resources, is also extremely vulnerable to forest fires and deforestation, mainly due to climatic conditions. Considering that forests are indeed one of our most important assets, we strongly believe in sustainable forest management in accordance with the Rio principles and the proposals put forward by the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests. In line with the positions of our partners in the European Union, we advocate the establishment by the United Nations General Assembly of an intergovernmental committee to negotiate a global forest convention.

It is beyond doubt that the major environmental problems of our planet cannot be successfully tackled and sustainability cannot be attained unless socio-economic ills of paramount importance, such as poverty, are combated and eradicated. The use of sustainable production and consumption patterns must be intensified and expanded, while eco-efficiency is substantially increased. Capacity-building and close cooperation with third partners and major groups, as well as public awareness, should be actively promoted.

Just reconfirming the commitments we undertook in Rio five years ago is not enough. It is imperative to commit ourselves to meeting specific objectives, including the elaboration of strategies for fresh water and oceans, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the negotiation of a global convention on forests and the introduction of an integrated approach and a life-cycle analysis in all sectoral policies.

This time, firm commitments on all these issues, so critical for our future, must lead to concrete actions. The historic challenge ahead of us must be met.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I thank the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works of Greece for his statement.

Mr. Theodoros Koliopanos, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works of Greece, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear a statement by Her Excellency Mrs. Ruth Dreifuss, Federal Councillor of the Swiss Confederation.

Mrs. Ruth Dreifuss, Federal Councillor of the Swiss Confederation was escorted to the rostrum.

Mrs. Dreifuss (Switzerland) (*interpretation from French*): Five years ago the Conference on Environment and Development sent a powerful wave of hope across the world. The key to the Rio Conference was interdependence between social development, economic development and environmental protection.

Through this integrated approach, the dialogue between developing and industrialized countries has been radically transformed. Today we are partners, convinced that we share one reality and one destiny.

The dialogue has also been changed within our own societies. Cooperation between ministries has been strengthened, allowing the promotion of more coherent policies involving all political sectors. Non-governmental organizations and the economic sector have been involved in this process, and they must be even more closely involved.

Unfortunately, with regard to specific achievements, many hopes have been dashed today. Progress has been insufficient and too slow, and we are still a long way from goals set in Agenda 21. I consider that our most regrettable shortcoming concerns the struggle against poverty, an essential prerequisite for any lasting success. The eradication of poverty necessitates strengthened international solidarity, expressed in considerable financial resources for poor countries and their greater access to the most efficient technologies. It also requires respect for

human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for the rights of workers, the participation of marginalized sectors of the population in the decision-making process and access for all, in particular women, to economic resources, education and health-care systems.

In a number of fields we need to take important steps in the coming months. In the struggle against climate change we hope that, at the December Conference in Kyoto, Japan, we will be able to reach binding and quantifiable commitments to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases. We want to continue the work begun on forests in the framework of an intergovernmental forum, in order to implement the Intergovernmental Panel's proposals for action and to achieve concrete results, especially with a view to identifying the constituent elements of a convention. We want to complete the work with regard to the trade in hazardous chemicals through the implementation of a binding procedure of prior informed consent, and rapidly to begin work on persistent organic pollutants. We must make operational the Convention to Combat Desertification, starting at the first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention.

One of the themes we must address urgently is the sustainable management of water, which is a basic resource indispensable for human life, an inescapable economic factor and an essential component of the natural environment. Switzerland, a mountainous country, attaches particular importance to the implementation of chapter 13 of Agenda 21, through cooperation with a number of developing countries, in order to promote the sustainable development of mountainous regions, thereby making an essential contribution to the preservation of freshwater springs.

We also need to make progress with regard to sustainable patterns of production and consumption, internalizing social and environmental costs and managing our energy resources much more economically, in particular by introducing a tax on aeroplane fuel.

All our words will, of course, be in vain if we do not deal with the question of financial means. Official development assistance is essential in the struggle against poverty and in the implementation of sustainable development. However, in recent years, industrialized countries have reduced the amount of official development assistance, and we must reverse this trend.

With regard to the financial mechanism for the Rio conventions — the Global Environment Facility (GEF) — Switzerland is satisfied with the progress achieved in accelerating the procedures for adopting projects. I am particularly happy with the leverage that the GEF has exercised on the operations of both the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme. These institutions are continually improving the integration of criteria for sustainable development into their projects.

Switzerland therefore supports the replenishment of the GEF, and I call on all Governments to contribute to it generously and to designate the GEF as the permanent funding mechanism for the Conventions on climate change and biodiversity. I am also very happy about the development of joint financing between public bodies and private investors, an area in which the GEF has proved to be innovative. But it is particularly important to encourage private investment for the most disadvantaged countries.

The implementation of our policy objectives is hampered by the complexity of our multilateral system. I take this opportunity to express my appreciation and admiration for determination of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the very competent people working with him, for undertaking the reform of the system. In order to contribute directly to the efficiency of the United Nations system, Switzerland has in recent years constantly improved the facilities in Geneva for intergovernmental organizations, national Government representatives — especially those from the least developed countries — and non-governmental organizations. We are continuing our efforts in this direction by offering new and even more favourable terms, especially for a centre for human rights and a centre for environment and sustainable development.

With regard to the environment in particular, there is an urgent need for the capacity and the role of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to be strengthened. UNEP needs to work as part of a network with other organizations and convention bodies involved in sustainable development. UNEP must be listened to and respected as the environmental authority of the United Nations system. For this purpose it is essential that the administration of UNEP be made more efficient and that its Governing Council be strengthened through the more direct involvement of political representatives.

In conclusion, we must acknowledge that we have fallen behind in the implementation of our commitments. However, let us not be discouraged by the slow pace of our progress, but rather stimulated. We must keep to our

ambitious objectives and apply ourselves with conviction and tenacity to reaching them.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I thank the Federal Councillor of the Swiss Federation for her statement.

Mrs. Ruth Dreifuss, Federal Councillor of the Swiss Federation, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jacques Santer, President of the European Commission, speaking on behalf of the European Community.

Mr. Jacques Santer, President of the European Commission, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Santer (European Commission) (*interpretation from French*): Five years ago a tremendous process was set in motion. The Rio Conference mobilized the conscience of the world and defined the principles that should underlie policies for sustainable development, placing them foremost among public concerns and providing objectives for every Government on Earth. More than anything else, the Rio process brings with it a responsibility that will be with us right through the twenty-first century. This responsibility applies at all decision-making levels and at all levels of society. It can be exercised in a spirit of partnership with civil society, based on solid foundations of democracy and respect for human rights.

It is this sense of responsibility that inspires the European Community, on whose behalf I have the honour of addressing the Assembly today. I take this opportunity to express support for the speech made yesterday by my colleague, Prime Minister Wim Kok of the Netherlands, on behalf of the European Union.

In assessing what has been done since Rio, we should not hide the truth. Notwithstanding the progress made, environmental conditions at the global level are still deteriorating rapidly. The amount of work still to be done to eradicate poverty and change production and consumption patterns is immense. Each one of us could and should have made greater progress in the implementation of Agenda 21.

Nonetheless, I believe I can say that since Rio the European Union has been moving in the right direction. Internally, we have better integrated environmental considerations into our policies on, for example, regional development, agriculture and energy. This process of integration has just been strengthened by the European summit held in Amsterdam, which made sustainable development one of the objectives of the new treaty.

Internationally, our bilateral agreements with partner countries and regional groupings contain provisions on sustainable development that are the subject of our regular discussions with them. Moreover, the European Community is a party to 32 international agreements on the environment.

Lastly, in the area of international cooperation, since 1992 the European Community itself has considerably increased funds for development projects whose primary object is environmental protection.

But all this is just a start, of course. We must continue advancing actively down this path. I see three priority objectives for us all. To start with, we must switch over to patterns of consumption and production that are more economical with natural resources and pay greater heed to the absorptive capacity of our planet. To this end, the European Union has put forward three initiatives on water, energy and the concept of eco-efficiency. The transfer of technology is also important in helping developing countries to make this transition, and the industrialized countries can and must make a substantial contribution to meeting the Rio objective by working to that end.

The second priority is to mobilize market forces for sustainable development. This requires, first, the establishment of appropriate structural policies at the national level — for example, by making sure that environmental costs are reflected in market prices. But the rules governing international flows of goods, services and capital must also be compatible with the objectives of environmental protection.

Lastly, international cooperation needs to be considerably deepened at the level of international institutions and multilateral agreements and by strengthening development aid in accordance with the Rio commitments. Aid retains all its economic and political importance. It is even more effective when it acts as a lever to the adoption of sound internal sustainable development policies and to the mobilization of the private sector.

In the course of this week, we must reach agreement on clear priorities and set precise targets for action which

will enable us to measure our progress over the next five years. The European Community, for its part, means to continue acting as a driving force.

Concerning trade, we are determined to continue pushing the debate in the World Trade Organization to ensure that trade liberalization and environmental protection serve to reinforce one another. We have, incidentally, just decided to improve access to the market for least developed countries and we look forward to seeing the same commitment from our partners.

As to our development aid policy, we intend to increase the percentage of aid allocated to projects focusing on environmental protection and social development. This reflects our concern not just to step up the level of resources put into sustainable development, but also to raise the quality of our efforts by more effective targeting and greater effectiveness. We will also go on giving major support to Africa.

As to climate change, we call on all industrialized countries to join us in our commitment to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The European Union believes that all should commit themselves to reducing such emissions by 15 per cent from the 1990 levels by the year 2010. Our joint commitment to sustainable development will be put to the test in Kyoto.

Concerning forests, the European Community intends to translate the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests into measures to protect and develop its own forests, and to use all its aid programmes to assist implementation elsewhere. We are ready and eager to embark on a negotiation on a forests convention.

Lastly, the European Community will work to conclude the present negotiations on a multilateral agreement on investment to help ensure that direct foreign investment flows take environmental considerations into account in an appropriate manner.

To further sustainable development in the North and the South of our planet alike, we must work in partnership both to eradicate poverty and to achieve sustainable production and consumption patterns. That is the point of the process launched in Rio five years ago. Let us now rally round in a shared determination to strengthen the process by giving it fresh impetus that will see it through the next five years. We are here to agree on a programme for implementation that we must carry out with a will.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I thank the President of the European Commission for his statement.

Mr. Jacques Santer, President of the European Commission, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The next speaker on the list is Ms. Joji Carino of Survival International, speaking on behalf of the Indigenous Peoples' Major Group.

Ms. Joji Carino of Survival International was escorted to the rostrum.

Ms. Carino (Survival International): I thank the General Assembly for giving me this opportunity to speak. I speak today for the indigenous and tribal peoples of the tropical forests — the Batwa of Rwanda, the hill tribes of Thailand, the peoples of the Amazon, the *adivasis* of India. I am an Ibaloi-Igorot from the Cordillera region of the Philippines.

In 1992, leading up to the Rio Conference, we formed an International Alliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests in response to the global destruction of our forests. We are part of a powerfully resurgent movement of indigenous peoples worldwide who today find ourselves at the chalk face of the global crisis of development and environment — "development" usually meaning mining, oil pipelines, logging, damns and biopiracy; and environment, usually meaning our lands, our territories and our spiritual bonds with creation and our mother, the Earth.

Sixty per cent of the world's uranium derives from indigenous territories. Half of the Western world's alluvial gold is extracted from tribal lands and waters. The largest single supply of diamonds is mined from a site sacred to aboriginal Australians. Most of the remaining tropical forests are on indigenous lands. Parks and protected areas overlap with our homelands. Many rivers flow from our mountains and the Earth's biodiversity is intimately linked with indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge.

How can we reconcile our disproportionate contribution to the world's environmental protection and economic growth with our disproportionate impoverishment, materially and socially, leading even to the extinction of many of our peoples? When the world is prepared to deal with this paradox, this social injustice,

then I can be convinced that the world is ready for sustainable development.

Is there not a danger that the economic growth and liberalization, and even the environmental protection called for under Agenda 21, will be pursued on the backs of our people? Are Governments prepared to recognize that indigenous peoples' self-determination and sustainable development are two sides of the same coin? Can all Governments that have stated their commitment to forests undertake this as a partnership with indigenous peoples?

Today, the huge imbalance in our human relations is directly feeding the imbalance in our relations with the Earth. The current global trends are dismal, but in the few areas where indigenous peoples are granted respect, difficult but impressive gains can be made.

We have had 500 years of incorporation. In the next five years, let us usher in 500 years of respect and cooperation. For, make no mistake, we are not peoples of the past. We are your contemporaries, and in some ways, maybe your guides to a more sustainable future. Indigenous peoples represent 95 per cent of human cultural diversity, and, I daresay, 95 per cent of humanity's breadth of knowledge for living sustainably on this Earth.

The world has woken up to the loss of biodiversity, but not to the disappearance of our cultural heritage. Modern societies are implementing protected areas for wildlife and biodiversity. We must look now to demarcating and recognizing indigenous lands and territories as guaranteed spaces for sustainable use.

Since Rio, there has been increasing policy attention given to indigenous peoples, and I particularly wish to highlight the International Meeting of Indigenous and other Forest-Dependent Peoples on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests, held in Leticia, Colombia, with the sponsorship of the Danish and Colombian Governments.

However, other Government contributions in the post-Rio processes have not always been generous, some seeking to limit our recognition and participation as peoples. To date, there are no mechanisms for indigenous peoples to share in decision-making in international forums that affect our lands and our lives, at the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

These bodies could learn from the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, where indigenous peoples can sit with Governments and international agencies to discuss the United Nations Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in its open-ended Working Group.

Indigenous peoples are convinced that in the next few years, international standard-setting activities at the United Nations will become extremely crucial for advancing our welfare and our rights. This year will mark five years since Rio. We are also three years into the United Nations International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, with the theme "Partnership into Action". This special session of the General Assembly should reaffirm two important goals of the Decade: first, the adoption of a United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and secondly, the establishment of a permanent forum within the United Nations for indigenous peoples, to cover such issues as development, environment, health, culture and human rights.

This will remedy the striking absence of a mechanism within the United Nations for coordination and regular exchange of information among Governments, the United Nations system and indigenous peoples.

In the next few years, one criterion for measuring progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 should be the actions taken to secure the rights of indigenous peoples and their well-being.

I look forward, therefore, to future Agenda 21 reports on the progress being made on the following measures: first, securing the demarcation and recognition of indigenous peoples' territories and the control and management of our ancestral lands; secondly, greater attention given to promoting cultural diversity and indigenous cultural and intellectual rights; thirdly, the establishment of permanent mechanisms for shared decision-making for indigenous peoples and other major groups within the CSD, the Convention on Biological Diversity and any post-IPF forest forum; and fourthly, the inclusion in the forest agenda of the detailed proposals arising from the Leticia meeting of indigenous and other forest-dependent people.

In the past five years, I have sensed a growing acknowledgment of indigenous peoples by other sectors of society involved in the quest for sustainable

development. This partnership can only herald better times for all of our children.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I thank Ms. Joji Carino of Survival International for her statement.

Ms. Joji Carino of Survival International was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The next speaker on the list is Mr. Hans Blix, Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Mr. Hans Blix, Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Blix (International Atomic Energy Agency): Energy, in particular electricity, is of fundamental importance to sustainable development, and nuclear fission offers the world ways of generating vast amounts of electricity and heat without causing acid rain or contributing to global warming and without risk that the fuel will run out. Nuclear power, rather than being largely ignored or written off by reference to public concerns, would deserve to be examined on its merits by United Nations organs in search of a sustainable energy mix.

There are many other peaceful uses of nuclear energy which directly facilitate or promote sustainable development. A few examples may suffice: radiation is used routinely in medicine against cancer; in agriculture, seeds are irradiated to produce new varieties which may be more high-yielding, more drought-resistant or saline-tolerant. Radio-isotopes are used to trace water in arid zones and to find the right dosage of water and fertilizers for plants. The study of naturally occurring isotopes also contributes to understanding the environment. For example, by analysis of the isotopic composition of deep ice cores, we can reconstruct climate change over thousands of years and thereby help predict future global change resulting from greenhouse gas emissions.

In short, nuclear techniques and radiation serve mankind in many important ways. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) helps to promote sustainable development by transferring many of these techniques to developing countries. At the same time, the Agency assists member States in establishing radiation protection legislation and supervisory authorities to ensure that the techniques are used safely.

Nuclear waste has special characteristics, and its transportation and disposal calls for prudent handling. However, compared to many other types of hazardous waste, it has one great merit: the volumes are small and can be safely managed in their entirety. Thus, a 1,000-megawatt electric nuclear-power plant produces about 35 tonnes of spent fuel per year, while a coal power plant of similar capacity emits, *inter alia*, some 6.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide per year.

Among the objections to nuclear power we often hear are claims that there is no solution to the problem of the disposal of nuclear waste. This is a misunderstanding. There is, indeed, remarkable agreement among nuclear scientists and engineers around the world about the techniques and methods of disposing of all nuclear wastes in ways which protect both present and future generations. For instance, the high-level wastes can be encapsulated and embedded in the crust of the Earth, from where the uranium once came.

In the Rio process, the IAEA was made the task manager for the question of nuclear waste. I am pleased to report that detailed, internationally agreed safety standards on waste disposal have been adopted by the IAEA and a binding convention, as called for by the Commission on Sustainable Development, is expected to be concluded in a few months. This convention, which covers spent fuel and radioactive waste management, contains basic safety rules which are universally supported and opens the way for registration with the IAEA of disposal sites and for mutual peer review of disposal practices among the parties.

The transboundary movement of nuclear waste is covered by IAEA guidelines and is also referred to in the draft convention I have just mentioned. The underlying principles are simple and straightforward.

First, any country using nuclear material has the responsibility to ensure that the material and the waste is managed and disposed of in a safe and environmentally satisfactory manner.

Secondly, no country has any obligation to receive nuclear wastes generated in another country, and any country is free, if it so wishes, to prohibit the receipt of foreign nuclear waste.

Thirdly, sovereign States are free to enter into bilateral, regional or international arrangements concerning the transport and disposal of nuclear waste

when they conclude that this may have advantages from the viewpoint of safety or efficiency, or both.

Let me note that the rules applicable and techniques available for the disposal of civilian nuclear waste are fully compatible with sustainable development. They allow the present generation to make use of nuclear energy without posing any threats to future generations. What is not compatible with sustainable development is the way we dispose of the wastes from energy generation by fossil fuels. These wastes are so voluminous that for the most part they are released into the atmosphere or deposited on the surface of the Earth. In particular, the gigantic emissions of carbon dioxide which are linked to the burning of all hydrocarbons raise the risk of global warming. No viable method is in sight to segregate and neutralize these carbon dioxide emissions.

While a welcome consensus has existed for quite some time on energy efficiency and on further efforts to develop and use renewable sources of energy, there ought to be a greater awareness and recognition that these measures do not offer an adequate answer to the risk of global warming. The stark reality is that since Rio carbon dioxide emissions have been going up, not down. Various energy scenarios show that an expansion of nuclear power can have a significant impact. As reported last year by the International Energy Agency of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), increased reliance on nuclear power has accounted for the greater part of the lowering of the carbon intensity of energy economies of the OECD countries for the last 25 years. At the present time, there are good reasons to appreciate that much of the rapid economic development in North-East Asia is supported by nuclear power. Experience shows that the alternative to such large base-load electricity generation by nuclear power would be power generation by fossil fuels.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I thank the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency for his statement.

Mr. Hans Blix, Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency , was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.